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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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SUBJECT Opinions in the SED Central Committee on Beria's Fall

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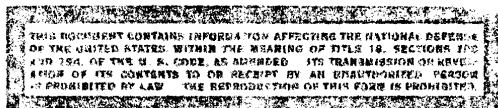
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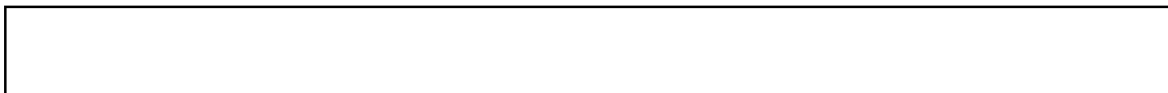
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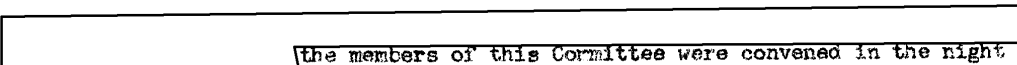


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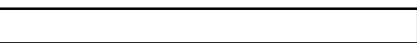


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the members of this Committee were convened in the night of 9 to 10 July to learn of an official Kremlin statement on Beria's overthrow. While the statement was being read there was great commotion among the conferees, followed by a silence which extended over minutes. Hermann Axen then declared that both the Politburo and the Central Committee would refrain from comments of their own. At the present moment, it was the chief concern of the Central Committee to counteract all symptoms of panic and confusion as observed among party functionaries and members immediately after Stalin's death.

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2.



the conferees, after feeling confounded, had betrayed a feeling of relief. The subsequent discussions had revealed the existence of two different bodies of opinion. One thesis was that it had now become clear why no unambiguous directives had been given to the SED leadership. The execution of the new course as distinct from the Stalin course had been thwarted by Beria. It had been Beria's intention to become Stalin's successor and he had wanted to continue Stalin's ruthless policy. Beria's overthrow had removed the decisive obstacle in the promotion of the new course. This analysis would also explain why the state security organs had been unable to cope with the situation on 16 and 17 June. All these unpleasant things happened because Wilhelm Zaisser was ordered by Beria not to intervene effectively, in order to give the latter a chance of proving to his Kremlin colleagues that the new course steered by them was fatal and would set off a movement beyond control. Beria had tried to nip the new course in the bud.

3.

The other faction within the Central Committee consisted of those members who, after Nemenov voiced his criticism against the SED leadership and encouraged the leaders of so-called bourgeois parties, initiated disciplinary procedure of the supreme party tribunal against themselves. This group, which, allegedly, included Fritz Ebert and Herbert Barnke, supported the Ulbricht course and were against all concessions made to the CDU, LDP, and NDP. According to them, the Pravda statement indicated that Beria was accused of having boycotted the official party policy by pursuing a policy of surrender vis-a-vis capitalism. This body of opinion therefore held that Beria had sponsored the new course. They supported this view

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by pointing out that Beria had tried to undermine the system of collective farming. The same had happened in East Germany, where the development of the farmers' production cooperatives had been stopped and farmers were allowed to leave these cooperatives. The new economic policy pursued in East Germany, by encouraging private trade and small and medium private enterprises, also reflected the Beria line, which would needs lead to a **restoration** of capitalism. In this connection, reference was also made to Beria's encouragement of bourgeois nationalism in the component republics of the USSR, a line of policy which was also ordered by Semenov in East Germany, where bourgeois politicians like Nuschke, Dieckmann, Dr. Loch, Dr. Polz, and the former officer clique assembled in the NDPD were being preferred to the **Old Guard** of Communists, who were being pushed into the background and even prosecuted. From all these arguments, the latter faction concluded that Beria was responsible for the new course of surrender, which could also be observed in Hungary, Ukraine, and Georgia, Beria's home country. Consequently, it was only logical to expect that after Beria's fall, Stalin's policy would be resumed. They believed that the old guard would be rehabilitated, the bourgeois elements shown the places where they belonged, and Semenov, Beria's man, reprimanded, if not called back and punished. The unwavering protagonists of the old course such as Ulbricht would **return to favor**.

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